

THE CATALYST CENTRE

Promoting cultures of learning for positive social change



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Seize The Moment

*A popular education process
of analysis & action for social change*

V 1.0c



THE CATALYST CENTRE

a zine for social change

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OUTREACH CHART

Identifying individuals and groups to invite / involve

This is an example of a chart tool was used in a coalition meeting to facilitate the sharing of information about who should be invited to future meetings. Each intersection of the chart suggests a critical question about what the group knows or doesn't know. Produced as a poster and using post-it notes (which are placed on the appropriate box), participants wrote out names, numbers, e-mails, etc., of who to consider involving. In a half hour one group had identified over 100 individuals or groups to contact. This is a generative tool, the results of which then need to be critically examined and discussed.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	WOMEN	PEOPLE OF COLOUR	YOUNG	GEOGRAPHY	LABOUR	New Canadians	Racialized communities	1 st Nations	Poor neighbourhoods	Organized neighbourhoods	Politicians	Students	Cops (housing, food, consumer, etc.)	Community associations (social services)	Tenants	Education	Seniors	Organizers, advocates, professionals
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ACCESS NEEDS QUESTIONNAIRE

for democratic communication

Name:
 Address:
 Phone:H:
 W:
 TTY:
 Fax:
 E-mail:

1. Special Needs: Do you need any of the following:

- a. Sign language interpreter
- b. Oral translation
- c. FM system ___Have own ___Need one supplied
- d. Attendent care (please supply details)
- e. Dietary needs: (please specify)

2. Materials in:

- large print
- braille
- audio tape
- computer disc (please specify format/software)

3. Equipment:

- hooyer lift bath seat ___with back ___no back
- side transfer bacht bench
- commode chair

4. Personal data

- Smoker/Non-smoker
- allergies (please specify)
- type of disability
- do you use a wheelchair
- type of wheelchair
- do you use a scooter

5. Transportation

- How will you be travelling to the meeting: car, plane, train, bus?
- Are you able to transfer to a car or mini-van or do you require a wheelchair van?
- If you are travelling by WheelTrans will you need assistance from the van to the meeting room?

INTRODUCTION

Seize the Moment - made simple

What is Seize the Moment?

Seize the Moment (STM) is a method of democratic critical thinking used in community building and development for positive social change.

STM is a democratic way for groups to do problem solving around issues that affect the communities they serve. Using STM leads to stronger collective abilities to do social analysis for action, more efficient delivery of services to people in need, a more interconnected service and social movement sector, and a more informed and involved public amongst other things.

Based on the process Naming the Moment (see next page for some background), an innovative method developed in the 1980s that incorporated the then current learnings from the fields of organizational development, adult education, skills training, conflict resolution, coalition building and more, STM builds on this history and, like its predecessor, builds on the best practices available both in the above-mentioned fields as well as drawing on the unique experiences of participating organizations.

How does it work?

The STM model is also based on the critical thinking process of action-reflection-action that can be applied in many different ways. STM's basic steps include:

1. Setting the stage for Democratic Communication
2. Naming ourselves
3. Naming the Issues
4. Assessing the Forces
5. Planning for Action
6. Taking Action
7. Evaluation

The actual implementation of an STM process requires drawing on a vast menu of possible activities depending on the specific context (organizational change, cross-sectoral analysis, coalition building, etc.).

Usually a representative group will work on behalf of a larger group to design and facilitate an STM process. This process of design happens during the first phase "Setting the stage for Democratic Communication" during which many decisions are made that have to do with enabling and supporting the maximum amount of participation desirable of those individuals and groups most affected by the issue being analyzed. This process of design and preparation may result in a one to five day workshop, a series of evening workshops or a delegated committee meeting on behalf of the larger group.

As a self-reflexive process STM is constantly changing and adapting to new circumstances and the unique needs and cultures of the many groups that choose to conduct this type of popular education process.

THE WHAT'S HAPPENING CHART

The WHC is a tool to help us name and analyze the ways we perceive the reality of the moment. We think of people, institutions, laws, trends, events that affect our issue. An **Event** is an historical incident or fact. A **Trend** is a pattern of events or forces. The categories should be seen as fluid and interdependent. The ultimate purpose is to consider relations of power in the moment.

	Social / cultural	Economic	Political	Technologic	Environ-ment	Ideological	Personal
Local							
Nat'l							
Global							

- **Social/Cultural:** issues related to identity and culture (such as racism, gay pride, language rights, classism, etc.)
- **Economic:** issues related to production, income, taxes, loans, capital, etc.
- **Political:** issues related to the electoral process, legislation, regulation, judiciary, etc.
- **Technological:** issues related to objects and commercial processes that have impacts on daily life (such as computers, military equipment, bio-tech, cars, patented medical processes)
- **Environmental:** issues related to the living environment (such as use of resources, water, global warming, pollution, wetlands, bio-tech)
- **Ideological:** issues related to the creation and promotion of ideas and beliefs (such as the media, art, think-tanks, schools, religious institutions, musicians, writers, poets, publishers etc.)
- **Personal:** issue related to a person's life (e.g. marriage, parenting, job-status, etc.)

This is adapted from "the Matrix" from the *Coyuntural Analysis: critical thinking for Meaningful Action* by Mary Zerkel, Naming the Moment: political Analysis for Action by Deborah Barndt, and *Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability: An Exploration into the Global Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment* (1st edition) by Jorge Nef

THE SPIRAL MODEL

Based on the popular education model of collective learning through the process of action-reflection-action, the 'Spiral Model' represents the flow of this process. It is important to recognise that while the spiral model appears to follow a path from one step to the next, there is no definite order as the spiral moves through a continuum, from the bottom upward. In working through the STM process, a group may be drawn to return and re-examine a previous phase, while each time reflecting at a deeper level than before. Once an issue has been subjected to an STM process there is, ideally, a new starting point from which to begin again.

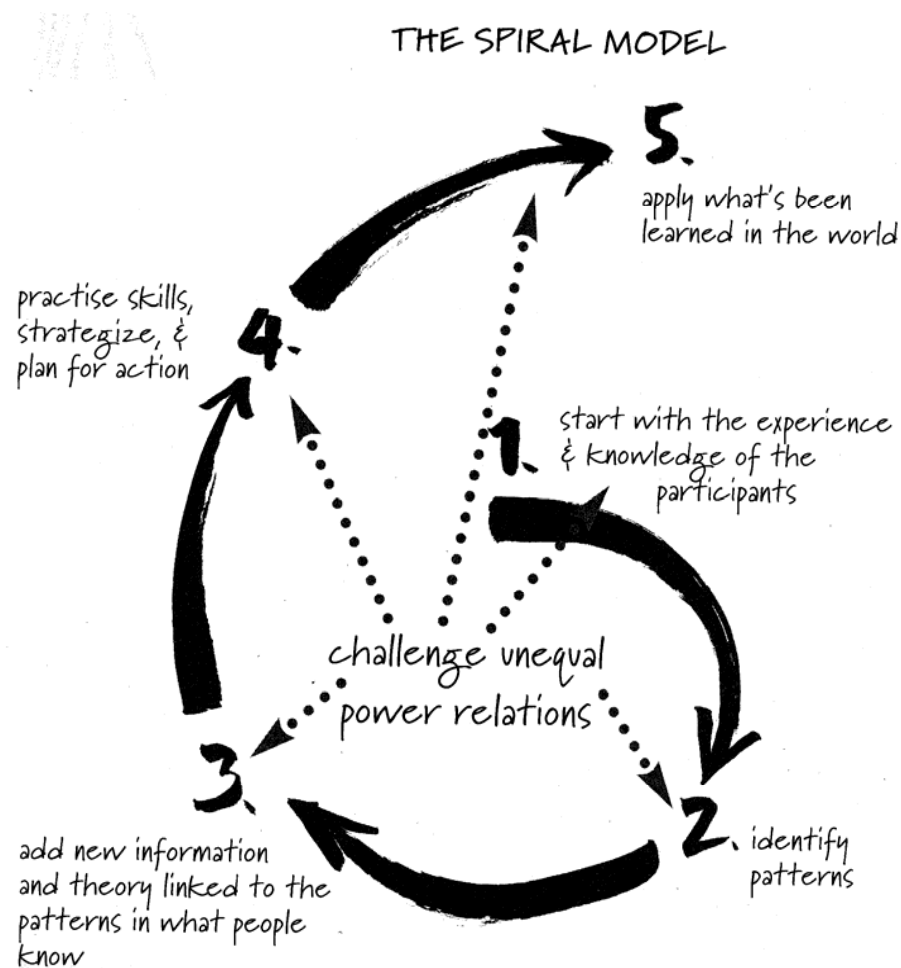


Image source: *Educating for Changing Unions* by Bev Burke, Jojo Geronimo, D'Arcy Martin, Barb Thomas, Carol Wall (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002) p. 57

WHAT IS POPULAR EDUCATION?

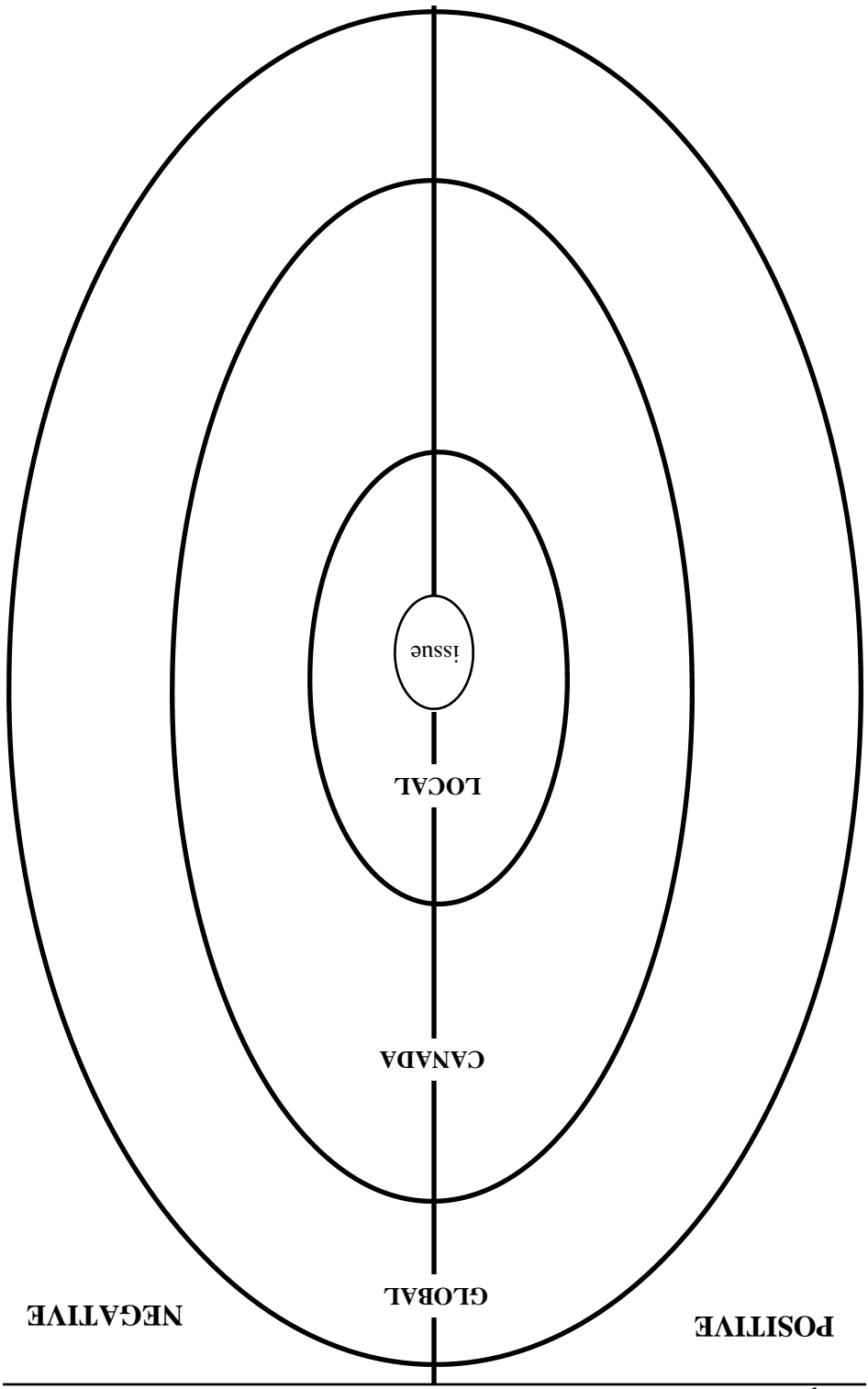
Popular education is old and new. It is about democratic communication and education. It is education that liberates. It is a process of learning to name those things in our world that oppress people, deny freedom, destroy the environment and otherwise perpetuate violence thus diminishing people's abilities to live. This type of learning has been around for many thousands of years. "Popular education" is merely the one of the more recent terms for this type of learning. Popular education is education for social justice and social change that takes a stand on the side of the marginalized people of society.

Popular education is also about collective learning. The social context of people working together to understand and change things is part of the process of naming the world in which they live in order to change it.

Thus, popular education, as a form of social change education:

- is voluntary
- begins with the experience of the participants
- moves from action to reflection and back to action
- critically examines unequal power relations (race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, age, etc.)
- unites theory and action
- encourages creative expression
- is non-coercive
- is an on-going process, not a single event
- encourages collective action for change
- models democratic relations amongst all participants
- is not neutral

NOTES:



POLITICAL WEATHER REPORT

OBJECTIVE

To share participants' knowledge and experience about events (and trends) related to an issue (critical question, concern, etc.) that a group has agreed to examine.

OF PARTICIPANTS: 4 or more

TIME: 20 – 40 minutes

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Large sheet of paper or several sheets of flip chart (the heavier the better, newsprint is sometimes too flimsy)
- Markers (at least one dozen)
- Index-card-size post-it notes or sheets of paper (approx. 5" x 4")
- Masking tape

STEPS

1. Identify an issue or critical question or concern about which you want to learn more (e.g. jobs and the economy; public health; human security; youth activism; etc.). It is good to write this issue in the centre of the diagram.
2. Draw a large circle on large sheet of paper and subdivide into section (see model)
3. State that the global economic, political, social/cultural, technological, etc. conditions of the world are constantly changing. Many things have impacts at every level of our life.
4. Explain "We're going to look at the big picture; a political weather report is a way to share some of what we know and to make some connections between our local communities and the changes occurring around the world. We call it a 'political weather report' because it resembles those weather diagrams we see on the evening news and, like the weather, we can use this to see what climate we are in and what is heading our way."
5. Present chart of political weather report with local, Canada and global circles and positive and negative sides
6. Explain that we're going to post events and trends (that affect the issue we identify) that we know about and are experiencing
7. In pairs, ask participants to "Think about the issue and list events or trends (positive and negative) (one per sticky note)"
8. Model this: For each event make a link to other circle (e.g. if you write a local event, e.g. "lost a job", then ask what is the link in the Canada circle and Global circle). There can be more than one link. It doesn't matter what circle you start in.
9. Have pairs post all their sticky notes and ask each pair to report one thing (showing the links from local/Canada/global links)

NOTES

If you have the time & resources you can play with the metaphor of 'weather report'. You can design the concentric circles to reflect time (e.g. past year, this month, next year). You could also prepare cards (on which participants write their contributions) to resemble weather symbols (e.g. storm clouds, sunny day, light showers, snow, etc.).

In Other's Words:

If you are here to help me, then you are wasting your time, but if you are here because your liberation is bound up in mine then let us begin.

Lily Walker

Many people are probably doing popular education without knowing it. The name is really secondary. If the process is participatory, critical, and supports people in organizing to change their situation, it's popular education.

Eduardo Baez

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which people transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to **name** the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new **naming**. People are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection.

Paulo Freire

It lets you take certain strength in finding that there are more of you than you might have dared to hope.

John Saul, Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa

[Naming the Moment] is a process of trying to understand a particular moment in terms of how political, economic and social forces come together, and what kind of space there is for social change within that moment.

Dawn Lyons, popular educator & feminist activist

[Naming the Moment] helped me to begin to look at things from my perspective and where I was, rather than from that kind of perspective we tend to soak up from the environment—the news and media images that we get.

Chrys Louis, Cross Cultural Communication Centre

A lot of people think they can't sing or play because they aren't 'talented'. But anyone can make music. I think telling someone they can't sing is like telling them they're stupid. It's another way that we are silenced.

Eve Goldberg

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

Richard Shaull (intro to Pedagogy of the Oppressed)

SEIZE THE MOMENT

THE SEVEN STEPS

A popular education process of political analysis for social change

Seize the Moment (STM) is a form of popular education that aims to by systematic and comprehensive in its approach to looking at all aspects of an issue. STM is a method of democratic critical thinking and action used in community building and development for positive social change. The seven ingredients of STM are all crucial but do not necessarily happen in a strict order. They may sometimes happen simultaneously, be repeated more than once or be used in other unique ways. The seven ingredients, including the principle goal for each and some key questions, are:

1. SETTING THE STAGE FOR DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATION

Goal: ensure that communication needs are met for all participants, including those who can't read, write or communicate in the same ways as the majority of the population.

- What communication needs do participants and potential participants have?
- How do we understand the concept of democratic communication?
- How can we better promote broad democratic communication?

2. NAMING OURSELVES

Goal: critically identify the make-up of the group (histories, identities, etc.) and make explicit our interests.

- Who are we? How do we define our constituency?
- Who is not present in this group and why?
- Who should be in this group and how does their absence limit us? How do we address this?
- How do we see the world and how has our view been shaped by our identity and personal history?
- Are we of, with, or for the people most affected by the issue(s) we work on? What is our vision of this work?

It required months of building

better relationships with representatives of various Native peoples' organisations at the end of which there existed a highly imaginative design incorporating both

Native (e.g. talking circles, storytelling teachings) and non-Native methods (e.g. collective murals, popular theatre) of dialogue, information sharing, critical analysis and collaborative action. This included using, as a conceptual frame, the two-row wampum treaty belt,

Kuswenthia (a beadwork belt that was made with a unique pattern to represent various types of agreements), a co-existence agreement between 18th Century Dutch settlers and the

Haudenoshanunc (People of the Long-house or Iroquois – a confederacy of five Indigenous nations) This led to the creation of a mural exercise which invited participants to take photographs of themselves and place them on one of two parallel lines; one of canoes and one of tall ships. This brought on an immediate

contradiction typical of the complexity of identities in the 20th Century. Some African-Canadian participants expressed discomfort about putting their pictures on what were images of slave ships, whilst some Native participants felt that their mixed heritage made it nonsensical to

simply place their images on the line of canoes. This led to a highly critical and mutually informative dialogue about our many identities and the different stakes involved in self-identifying for each of us. By the end of the 1991-1992 workshop series we had conducted eight monthly workshops plus a variety of additional

activities planned during the workshops including a puppet production of the 'Ojibway Prophecy of the Seven Fires' and participated in the October 12, 1992 demonstration in Toronto, Ontario celebrating 500 years of resistance and survival of indigenous peoples worldwide.

'Naming the Moment' today

This is merely the briefest taste of a long and creative process. While the Moment Project no longer exists, the 'Naming the Moment' process has continued to be

applied across Canada and elsewhere in the world. Founded in 1986, it has spread and, no doubt, adapted to local circumstances wherever used. It has been used for community analysis, coalition building, anti-racist change, organisational development and strategic planning.

Currently, the Catalyst Centre in Toronto, Canada, has revived some of the elements of the Moment Project. It is calling its project 'Seize the Moment' with the intention of drawing on many practices around the world that are participatory and critically minded in order to continue to build the democratic processes of dialogue that 'Naming the Moment' is one example of. Catalyst is currently concentrating on looking at the

question of the participation of peoples with disabilities in social movement work. This has provoked the need to re-examine the 'four phases' and Catalyst has begun to conceptualise a 'five phase' process that would include a new 'Phase 1'. This crucial phase, which has existed implicitly until now, would name more

explicitly the need to establish pre-conditions for democratic participation of all peoples (especially people with disabilities). This has important implications for the types of interpretation support that is made available, the location of gatherings, and the solidarity of all

people with the struggles of people with disabilities. In keeping with the constantly self-critical nature of 'Naming the Moment', 'Seize the Moment' promises to develop some powerful tools to strengthen this

popular education practice for the benefit of all practitioners who are committed to social justice.

and forth movement necessary in order to ensure a democratic and participatory process. Naming the Moment allows for, and encourages, much negotiation of meaning. Ideally, there is at least some work done in the beginning about ‘naming ourselves’. Practically speaking, this can mean something as simple as introductions, but this can go much further into some sharing of personal and/or community histories, a critical look at both who is present and not present (especially regarding race, class, gender, ability etc). Having conducted some ‘naming’ of ourselves, it is then important to share some information (often stories of one kind or another) in order to identify key concerns or issues. This creates the need to decide which issues are important enough to warrant collective critical analysis. (Should it prove that one of the issues has to do with who is missing then a re-visiting of Phase One might prove necessary). Once a democratic (and critical) process has identified key issues, deeper analysis can be applied and finally the question of ‘what to do about it’ must be posed and action steps discussed (if not agreed upon).

Some examples

So what does it all look like when it actually gets applied?

Naming the Moment requires some form of gathering. It is about collective learning and therefore necessitates bringing together a variety of stakeholders. These gatherings take time: a series of eight three-hour workshops is typical; but a day or two-day long meeting can accomplish a great deal. As mentioned above, each application is unique according to the combination of participants and the circumstances that define the need to conduct such a process. As the design is negotiated, it typically includes a range of techniques from fairly conventional large and small group dis-

cussions to the use of many popular education techniques such as popular theatre sculpturing (creating silent tableaux with workshop participants’ bodies), collective mural making, drawing, simulation games, political weather reports (a drawing technique to analyse important trends), and a variety of types of timelines, to mention a few.

An example that illustrates well some of this is the Naming the Moment workshop series that ran from May 1991 through October 1992 and which we called ‘Recovering Stories of Resistance’. Each year Naming the Moment focussed on a different aspect of social justice struggle and, when the community was invited, in the Spring of 1991, to discuss what important upcoming themes were, someone mentioned that plans were well underway to “celebrate” the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in the Americas. This was critically discussed and it was agreed that this was not a moment of celebration for the millions of indigenous peoples of the America’s for whom Columbus’ arrival marked the beginning of centuries of genocide and oppression. We decided to “re-frame” this 500th anniversary to examine the struggles of indigenous peoples to preserve their cultures and their lives. The negotiations of the workshop series began in earnest. As Deborah Barndt, founder of the Moment Project, writes in *Revisiting the Boats and Canoes: Popular Education around the 500 Years*:

‘Initially, some of us had imagined working our way through the 500 years, starting with 1492, and marking key events along a linear path, left to right. Our Native colleagues suggested however, that we start the process in the present, in the personal lives of all of us, then move back to the roots to understand both how we got here and where we might go from here.’ (Convergence, Vol. XXX, #1, Toronto, Ontario, 1992).

3. NAMING THE ISSUES

Goal: *collectively and democratically identify key issue(s) that the group will address.*

- What current issues/struggles are of most concern to group members?
- What key issues/struggles does the group agree deserve attention?
- What are our goals in the short-term and long-term?
- What is the history of struggle on this issue (and what have been the critical moments of the past?)

4. ASSESSING THE FORCES

Goal: *analyze the movements, institutions, philosophies, trends, environments, people and groups that affect the key issue(s) the group has agreed to address.*

- What are the relationships of forces acting on an issue?
- Who (and what) is in support/opposition of our issue?
- Who (and what) is uncommitted?
- What are their short-term and long-term interests?
- What are the strengths and weakness of both sides?
- What do we need more information about?

5. PLANNING FOR ACTION

Goal: *develop & prepare actions that will promote positive change with the key issue(s)*

- What do we hope to achieve and what do we have the capacity of achieving?
- Whom should we be forming alliances with?
- What actions should we take (who will do what and when?)

6. TAKING ACTION

Goal: *to successfully complete plans for action*

7. EVALUATION

Goal: *to collectively learn from the process and actions of STM.*

- To what extent did we achieve the goal of democratic communication?
- How well did the make-up of the STM committee represent the people most affected by the key issue(s)
- How effective was the process in terms of identifying concerns, issues, forces, action-plans?
- How well did action meet the goals of the group?

SETTING THE STAGE

FOR DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATION

None is born knowing how to communicate democratically. It is something we must learn to do with the many groups with which we participate throughout our lives. One of the first things anyone learns who practices democracy is that it takes time. It can take *lots* of time. Just doing something yourself can take a moment. Doing it with a group with whom you need some agreement takes time. There's no way around this reality. But good planning can make the time taken much more effective than no planning.

The degree to which the ideal of democratic communication is reached is directly related to the time taken to prepare or, as this section is titled, "to set the stage". The importance of this stage is reflected in the Seize the Moment process outlined above. While the steps of STM cannot necessarily be applied in the order that they are laid out, the first step of "setting the stage" does deserve first consideration in any planning process. Ensuring that communication needs are met for all participants, including those who can't read, write or communicate in the same ways as the majority of the population requires considering many things including who should be invited (individually and organizationally), what type of meeting should happen, where a meeting will be held, the timing and duration of a meeting, what communication support is required and much more. The three STM questions are merely the tip of the iceberg and are relevant to many different types of meetings.

Checklist of considerations to support democratic communication:

- ◆ What communication needs do participants and potential participants have? How are you equipped to meet the needs of people whose disabilities are:

- Perceptual (e.g. visual or hearing impaired)
- Illness-related (e.g. multiple sclerosis)
- Developmental (e.g. Down Syndrome)
- Psychiatric (e.g. bi-polar, chronic depression)
- Mobility (e.g. quadriplegia, paraplegia)
- Environmental (e.g. asthma, sensitivities to allergens, chemicals - including perfumes)

- ◆ How do we understand the concept of democratic communication?
- ◆ How can we better promote broad democratic communication?

these phases is to beware the tendency to view them as a linear process moving from step one to step four. They are better understood as recipe ingredients that need to be mixed in proper measure and with respect to the uniqueness of local conditions.

Most recently, the Catalyst Centre, a popular education group based in Toronto, Canada, has begun a new project called Seize the Moment that aims to contribute to the continued growth of Naming the Moment and popular education in general. A recent initiative has already begun to conceptualise a five-phase re-vision of Naming the Moment. I will talk more about this later.

Some history

Naming the Moment followed the road back to Canada that many international development volunteers and workers took from the 1970s onward. It was in Latin American critical literacy and development work that a number of Canadian educators encountered the variety of popular education methods being used to enable communities to better resist the many oppressions that are yet with us (if not intensifying).

One popular education method encountered was conjunctural analysis. As applied by some popular education organisations, this was a collective means of conducting political analysis for action. Two dynamics proved important here: the movements of forces within society and the learning logic of action-reflection-action. What is unique about Naming the Moment is that it acknowledges that all people have experience that gives them the potential and the right to engage in this kind of analysis, and in so doing, this, people can become actors in changing their world and not merely acted-upon.

There are two ways in which it is important to recognise the meaning of 'popular' in popular education. First is the choice that popular education makes to take the side of the oppressed, recognizing, as Freire has argued, that no education is neutral. Second is the power of the process of action-reflection-action. When applied to the way in which people learn this affirms that the starting point for all learning is action - people live in the world and act all the time. Nobody enters a relationship or a process as a blank slate. We all have experiences that have shaped us and upon which we rely to explain the world to ourselves. In order to change the world in which we live, especially when it comes to resisting oppression, we must reflect upon that experience, analyse it critically for strengths and weaknesses and, finally, bring our reflection to bear upon new action which in turn will need to be reflected upon.

As conjunctural analysis made its way into Canada, the importance of social location asserted itself. Who was doing the analysis for whom? The educators who returned with the news and learnings about popular education were, precisely, relatively privileged individuals, and while no-one escapes participation in relations of oppression, it was important to be self-conscious about the stakes involved for returned Canadian volunteers and popular educators to be advocates of and participants in social justice movements. It was quickly obvious that before any popular education process could begin in Canada, there were questions that needed to be posed about who was involved in the work. Naming the Moment incorporated this as the first phase: Naming Ourselves.

In A Nutshell

As mentioned earlier, the four phases are not necessarily meant to be followed in a linear fashion. There is often much back

‘Naming the Moment’

a participatory process of political analysis for action

By Chris Cavanagh

Introduction

Practitioners of participatory and emancipatory methods of education in Canada owe a debt to the struggles of people in ‘Southern’ nations who have resisted and who continue to resist the many forms of oppression that sustain the global inequalities of wealth and power. And a principle source of inspiration for these practitioners has been the abundance of popular education methods (e.g. Freirian literacy techniques, community animation and training methods, popular theatre skills and much more) and theories that find their genesis in third world liberation struggles.

As with much else in popular education, Paulo Freire’s philosophical and pedagogical ideas can be found warming the heart of many different applications of popular education. These ideas include what is no doubt familiar to many readers of this journal: the non-neutrality of education, the dialectic of action-reflection-action, problem-posing methods, liberating pedagogy, literacy that enables people to read the word *and* the world and much more. One application of these ideas that has met with success in Toronto, Canada is Naming the Moment - a participatory method of identifying and analysing issues in order to decide how to act on them.

It is a tricky matter to write about Naming the Moment without doing injustice to some aspect of it. Like examining a crystal, each facet that you look at reveals a new aspect; and Naming the Moment is constantly developing and changing according to the unique circumstances of its use.

Essential to Naming the Mo-

ment is a democratic self-reflexive and critically creative process that results in constant adaptation and change, and, while it may seem to have a chameleon nature, there *are* some important constants, although these have less to do with actual techniques than with ideals of social justice, solidarity and emancipatory processes of learning.

Naming the Moment, at its best, combines a critical (and dialogic) understanding of both the structures of our world (political, economic, environmental, cultural, etc.) and the fluid movement of forces that act to sustain those structures in hegemonic equilibrium. Naming the Moment resists rigid certainties and creates spaces for creative understandings of the always changing world. Understandings that, when shared through dialogue (that includes drawing, and popular theatre and storytelling, allow for relationships that resist the tricky ways in which people and groups have been trained to often collude in their own oppression.

Naming the Moment advocates and necessitates alliances across many sectors (from labour to community to academia) and between different social movements. It is a multi-cropping practice of story-sharing, skills building and democratic dialogue that is simultaneously theory and practice.

The now out-of-print book *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action* (Jesuit Centre for Social Faith & Justice, Toronto, 1989) describes the process as having four phases: the naming of ourselves, the naming of the issues, analysing the issues and, finally, planning and taking action. One proviso about

- ◆ What type of meeting is to be held? A meeting can be focussed on one process or involve a variety. Being clear about which process is being used can help keep a group focussed and committed (e.g. is the meeting in decision-making mode or in creative discussion mode?). Meeting types include:
 - decision-making
 - information
 - public dialogue
 - negotiation
 - coalition building
 - project planning
 - creative brainstorming
 - workshop
- ◆ How does the physical meeting space affect communication (see accessibility checklist Appendix B)?
- ◆ What budget or other resources are available to support participants’ needs for democratic communication?
- ◆ Is it necessary to get agreement on the agenda before the meeting happens?
- ◆ Who is the best person to facilitate the meeting? Should the meeting be co-facilitated?
- ◆ Who is the best person to open the meeting (welcome participants, set the tone, introduce facilitators)?
- ◆ What are the necessary pre-meeting materials that participants should receive?

NOTES:

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION

Each time we participate in a democratic communication we must put our principles into action. This action will change from situation to situation. But there are some basic guidelines for participation and facilitation that are worth considering. Guidelines are not rules that must be followed or broken. A guideline that works in one situation may be inappropriate in another. And guidelines are not intended to prevent communication and, if they are doing so, they must not be treated as unquestionable rules.

Unique guidelines can be created, shared and agreed upon as each situation develops. Feel free to write some or all of these guidelines on a flip chart at the beginning of a meeting. Add new ones. Check with the group if the guidelines assist their democratic participation.

Some useful guidelines for participation include:

- Asking the individual how they would like to proceed with a situation (for example, how would a person like to have their messages communicated)
- respect that there are different abilities to communicate in the group
- respect that there are different cultural ways to communicate in the group
- listen more
- speak for yourself; don't volunteer other people to speak
- turn off cell phones and pagers during the meeting
- Don't interrupt when someone else is speaking
- If the process is unclear ask the facilitator (or a fellow participant) to clarify
- respect the process
- minimize cross talk
- take your turn to speak
- listen actively

- consider when it is best to speak from your experience
- take responsibility for your own participation
- offer assistance to the process, if appropriate
- look at the person to whom you are speaking
- be aware of using acronyms and other jargon that may need translation or explanation for other group members (i.e. take responsibility for the language you use)
- give space for people who haven't spoken yet; your point may be shared by someone else
- think about what you are going to say before speaking

GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATING

A good meeting is a rare thing. As the previous sections indicate, there is a great deal of preparation work that is necessary. But once the work is done and you are at the meeting there is then the need to run the meeting well and democratically. There are many approaches to facilitation and no single one is the right way. Circumstances are all-important. Facilitation is a form of group leadership that puts the emphasis on the participation of group members in both the tasks and processes of the meeting. A facilitator can act according to a range of styles from very hands-off to very interventionist. Generally, when facilitating, you should keep in mind:

- watching the time (keeping to the agreed schedule and pacing things well)
- keeping the group focussed on the agreed short & long term objectives
- providing adequate opportunity for all to participate
- encouraging active participation
- affirming and drawing on the full range of experience and knowledge in the group
- making sure that the time and space is being shared (not monopolized by any one person or interest)
- identifying conflict frankly and not being afraid to address it
- offering process suggestions whenever necessary (e.g. be willing to re-negotiate agenda if necessary)
- name issues through problem posing
- keep an eye on people's energy levels and, regardless of agenda and schedule, be willing to suggest changes
- remind group members of participation guidelines if and when necessary
- share responsibility for sharing information (ask if someone else in group can answer a question raised)
- share process responsibility when possible (e.g. keeping time, recording notes, filling in late-comers about what has happened so far)

Facilitating a good meeting should include:

- starting on time
- starting with introductions
- reviewing the agenda
- making sure that all are being given opportunities to participate
- ensuring that note-taking is useable by all participants (e.g. for visually-impaired is the writing large enough to see, or posted low enough on a wall to read)
- setting an ending time and sticking to it (or re-negotiating as soon as possible)
- establishing guidelines
- reminding all participants that everyone has different preferences and abilities regarding communication and that this takes time, patience and cooperation
- finish one thing before moving on
- affirm decisions (re-stating as necessary)
- set next meeting time (make sure you leave enough time to negotiate this)
- keeping your sense of humour